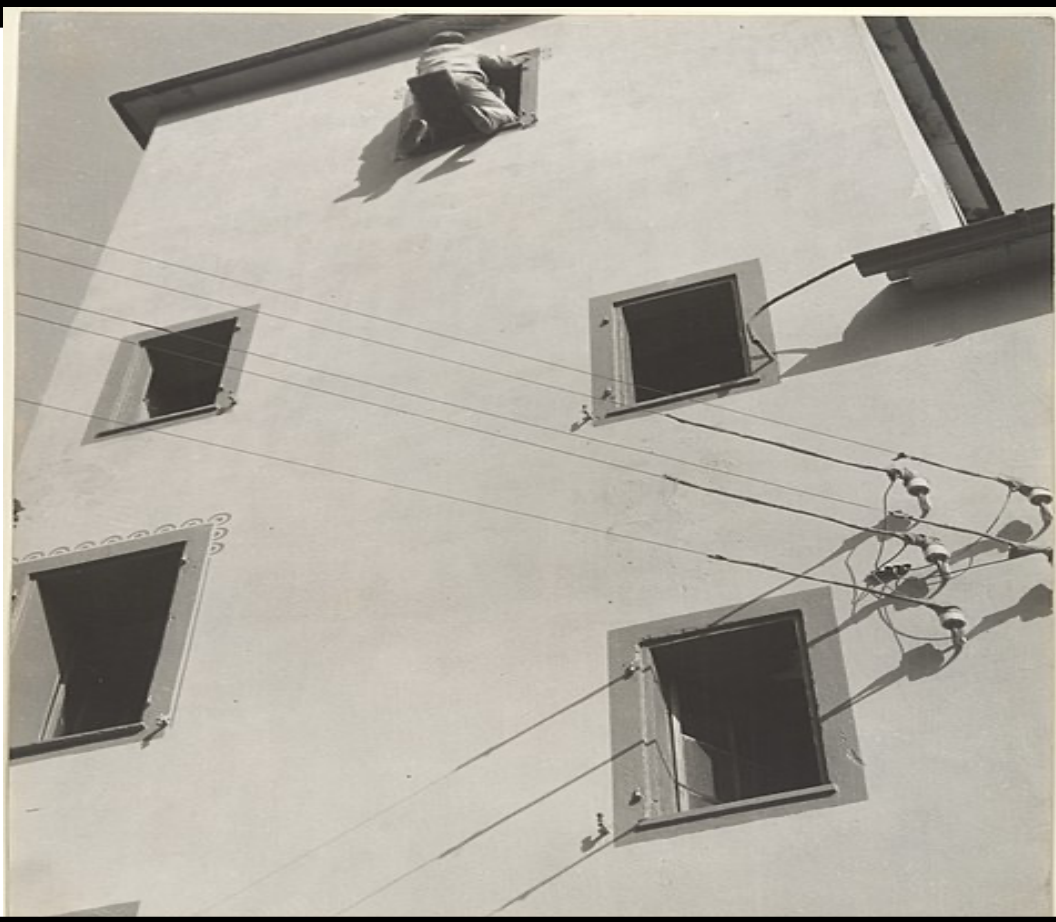
WHAT YOU WANT



Corey Qureshi

d e a d
m a l l
p r e s s

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What You Want
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WHAT YOU WANT

by

Corey Qureshi

Dead Mall Press | 2023

for everyone who's had to just figure it out
without credentials

and for Karla and Szuli, always and forever

ACCESS

Attached at my belt most days of the week,
a clip with many keys

The few old labels hold but new ones are weak,
they rub off of my keys

I find what I need thru reference and memory,
it's the same seven keys

Intuition and guesses work for me
when I search for the keys

to your rhythm, to your smile, to your peace
My waist jingles with keys

as my legs carry me to our rendezvous
I see you at the keys

playing the sounds that bounce through your darkness,
the dynamics're key

for the syncopation of music and life
intersecting: The key's

in my front door, you'll follow thru the darkness
I wonder the key

you'll sing reacting to intersecting sparked flesh,
I see you with your keys

leaving my apartment in the morning,
I'll see you with the keys

i hold to this building, you're at work and
leaving us locked up — Keys

only work when needed, the rest is knobs
and screens and opinions

THIRST

Be Honest
Stop fidgeting, breathe slow
Get water, smell fridge for chemicals
Drink water with chemical taste,
Dump water, pour another cups
Drink water, it's alright
Avoid chemical fridge food, think about money
Drink water, stare at hot screens
Get high, look at poems

Pay Attention
Stop fidgeting, breathe slow
Go to drink from empty cup,
think about chemical water
Drink from the sink
Sit in the sun naked, masturbate
Think about food
Think about work
Think about the food at work
in it's perpetual staleness as i offer it to people

Pour chemical water in the empty cup
Pour chemical water in a yellow bucket,
When I'm open people love it so
they show up and expect something
but I'm working
don't force yourself on me

Be Honest
why are you here?
i'm trying to fund me and mine's life
and all the trips to overpriced
Center City food marts. it's clear
you don't want to pay for me
you don't want anything but nastiness

Pay Attention

this is the last you get
my throat is wet
my thirst is gone though
Chemical Water on my breath
suck my chest, this is the last you get
(i'm only half here as always)

Be Honest

Stop fidgeting, breathe slow
people never see themselves out
your attitude is fine but
your comfort costs mine
i like to be alone in the morning

THINGS SAID

after jamal rashad

youre doing a great job
wait, youre not a student
wait, before you take that away can i
can you take this
here
i dont know how you do that, i could never
that's disgusting
it's disgusting
who are you
oh, when'd you start
i didn't recognize you with that cut!
you kind of look like a terrorist now haha
nice haircut, ISIS
just make sure you let the front office know who you are
when you work by yourself Thursday
you did such a good job, i've never seen the bathrooms so clean
someone pissed all over the walls and the floor
can you come clean this spill
you probly need a mop
can you sweep that whole area over there when you get a chance
a little boy threw up in the library
now scrape the salt off these windows
scrape the ice off this nite lot
come here for a second
listen, some've the teachers've been saying your hallway is falling apart
i don't know what there is to improve, youre just not good at this
stop coming in on drugs
here take this
go weed and mow the administrative hills
come here, isn't this funny
look at this. shit's hot, isn't it
youre not gay are you
alright... well go do that over there, we'll meet up later
can you open the room for (me/us/them)
they left a mess, can you take care of it

STAFF MEETING

decrescendo into doubt
advocation hushes itself
as it travels down
naked folding tables
in responseless, awkward
meetings. similarly effected
eyes shine sympathetic.
certainty floats from
salaried mouths with
a crass, loud inaccuracy

vents pour out stillness
volunteers continually poke
their heads in. new hires
clear their throats, sip tepid
coffee from corporate cardboard
cause they don't have a place
to dump it, unknowingly witnessing
the turnover rate in action

nothing anyone says will
really matter to a listener—
eyes rolled, empathetic little stabs
for a situation's victim,
but the compassion performative

we live in permissive
states of regard
marred by apathetic responses
innocent carelessness sharp

and we'll all show up come tomorrow
cause that's how it works.

EXAGG

basis, but exagg
The point is unheard
The exagg is exagg'd
by obtuse academiks
that feel attac'd

Embellishment
universal sure but
you gotta be special
in the way your
pandering tickles,
ignores certain things,
butters the right
wallets or minds up

Mine's up to
no good, always
outside the wallet,
uncertified, making
intentionally unreasonable
claims and asks.
everyone choosing
to love me
suffers for the
perpetual exagg.

we can't stand conscription,
the terminologies that
perpetuate neglect
by exagg and contradiction

and This is how
they ignore us
This is how the department secures funding
and leaves the rest of us clutching

If it's not ism'd
If it's not cited
    it's not invited

TWO WAY

plastic wheels grate layered sheets of
plywood nailed together for a floor
swiveling with a look from my desk again,
i hear the door slam thru the wall —
the obsessive mutterings of relief,
their trickle stream flow torrent plop groans,
other sounds many keep committed to home

but sometimes, they don't have homes to
commit bowels to and i hear the tears,
the confusingly bureaucratic phone menus
they stumble thru out of necessity. when the
sink
runs too long i have to go make sure they're
okay,
make sure they didn't move in.
more than once there's been new tenants
napping with needles on the tiles.

when the young professionals're on
the phone the words're clear as hydration,
dirty as intentions saved for the
restroom privacy unwillingly broken by my
ears,
by the paper thin walls that act as a two way
mirror,
unheard when i yell SHUT UP at
people singing and washing their hands.

the pipes bordering my space sing
with flushes and washing of hands
no plans to ask for a new office
no compensation to put up with this
just another shift in my damp surveillance box

WHERE

is the poetry in cleaning up lukewarm liquid human feces without hazard pay without a living wage while the yuppie coworker that informed you snickers from his (grant writing loafer licking) desk chair?? Where are the poets when it's time to take out 400 pounds of garbage?? The juice of meals I can't afford rips thru plastic, sopping the mesh of sneakers, staining denims at the start of a shift. What good is an MFA when knives are pointed at you on the Night Owl after a 10-430am of drunk gayborhood gays asking for your number at the register ad infinitum?? I forgot about poems on my knees cleaning decades of archives of CBS newsreels under enormous vents blowing 20° on my hunched scrubbings, police and staff watching to make sure we didn't steal. I forgot about poems delivering packages fourteen gravel sizzling summer hrs a day to suburban whoever the fucks and their mail aggressive dogs. I forgot about (but could've used) poetry all the times I was mistaken for a student cleaning schools at 19. I'm worried about the role of the poet in ★★★★★★★. I'm worried about all the words I'll have to hear that'll only waste mental and emotional energy. That won't ever know these places. It's so easy to fade from passion to wages and survival. Where's the balance?? What function does a dayjob does a life without career serve?? Where's the use in me cleaning an unused building weekly in a pandemic?? How do writers contribute outside themselves?? Is that what it's for??

GARBAGE

my favorite shirts have holes in them
my lover wants them in the garbage

i hold and hoard remembrances
essences negate that theyre garbage

lost some shoes i love to some jobs
in various hells, cleaning garbage

presumed need for self-guided work
when degreeless, youre left with garbage

all of the concurrent options,
other factors to figure, garbage

i hold onto discomfort work
but really this career path's garbage.

the sidewalk of this college block
is strewn in undergrads' garbage

i want to get us out of here,
leave behind neighborhoods of garbage

i want to give you grassy feet,
leave present tensions in the garbage

RED TABLECLOTH

deep, deep in a lush green yard,
no noise of cars of
thousands down the street
just a late breakfast spread made
legs splayed toes gripping
blades of grass and damp dirt in toes
that loathe to run back in for odds and ends

i want excessive space for odds and ends
i want our moment three minutes
of walking from the street

i want to feel safe with you
on this type of street

cant think of mortgaging now
we can afford the few next months
that's the only guarantee
as my credit sinks in
debts previously unknown to me

but soon we'll get there
find new sustenances
and eat good and in love
off of a red tablecloth

RELAXX

i love to
give you time

i'm not in
a rush

i like not to
expect much

when the
day

permits

FOR RILKE

O what's the use.
Nite pours in, dripping all over,

so what's the use
in attempting dryness?

To change your life,
you must give up

You must reconceive all
and aid drenched warping

You must quicken the mold
so they give you a do over

If they don't, smash through
and make due or rot in pieces.

What's the use
in pushing poems?

Only tangible types
get things.

CUSTODY

does it get harder this way
persistent like holes in
the sock nowhere near home,

ripped my way through retention
i hold out for more steps,
she matters most to me

there's less bad times but tension
courses thru all our texts
hows it supposed to be

i only want a presence
dont leave me unthought of
and holding out for

already so many months
of changes, so many
small moments grown out of
my steps roll now i wonder
does it get easier
seems so expensive

seems very important
fear of change, reactions
daily, plants for sunlite

you cant reach out for sunlight
thats not what its made for
it adorns unthought of

it cooks what courses through us
neither of us want to
lose sight of all those steps

they'll keep growing regardless
my guts ache a bit with
each goodbye, feeling
(ir)responsible

WHAT YOU WANT

can be exhausting
once you finally reach it

it isn't really what you want
need deludes and proximity

makes you squirm
makes you want to run
and figure out else

discard that
get where you need,
pour the concrete

and harden in
a new pose.

What You Want
is put through
a set of compromising,
cringing scenes,
an assortment of degradations
that only you know about

JOB

Temporarily devotional,
Exposed to whims

in a kind of stasis.
soon Everything Will Be Different

and my schedule changes
and i won't see my reasons as much.

Any direction travelled seems
ideal however long

it inevitably turns stasis
then Everything Will Be Different

again Specificity leading to
forced, arranged dynamic

and faux devotion

NEW

why'm i repeatedly put
in transient and
uninhabitable places
to wait work-relatedly??
every returnal incident
makes childish, i've hit
reset one too many,
not regret so much as
resignation. not tomorro
so much as feelings and
their consequences. age
doesn't exactly wipe out
impulse. god please don't
let us be middle aged
and entry level, don't
leave us dependent
and asking forever, don't
let us be so disposable
in minds of those that don't
deserve their power.

CAREER

married into
 a pissing contest
no my stream
 isnt so loud as

 has never
been an option
 will always
feel distinktive

attainable career damply crumbles
into filtered search for change

change as concept fog machines
itself to unreachable coordinates

Kareer as Koncept
Your Life as Big Swinging Dick

something i weakly laugh at

DYNAMIQ

the more i hear it
the more i hear it
and can't undo
the imprint of
the undercurrent of
and it's smeared on—
the intentioned expression,
the undercurrent which commands
and sets postures above
the true twist of
the spine to check if seen
and i cant help but see
the struggle to keep
the inner fascist inner
and but it's smeared on—
the ways you can't shake yourself,
the condescension,
and you aren't any different, aren't
the way you think you are.

NEW

am learning all the time am making messes on myself the clean cuts come later the owner wants quality from the start i'm a bit clueless some days some times are surprisingly painless but maybe just a series of silences cause people tire of being critical all the time throw hands up whatever works and an uninspired wafting clouds the accumulation space everyone's hourlies ticking themselves to a reset these varying dynamics maybe less defined than other recent ball and chains of mine but the variety of personalities is disturbing this is such a young old place simultaneous the seniority quiet you can see who their eyes are happy for it's only half the time for me it's whatever i don't know what's next either leaving at some point or it'll close first cause it'll close

DAYS OFF

unbuttoned peace
— much behind it that
isnt pubic hair but
a structure
wearing enough to
make window chirpings
that much sweeter
on days off,
days of
unbuttoned skin
glistened peace.

Dramatizing what i'm
unused to but is regular
will be but don't want
to accept ugh the
dynamic that much
closer to chest
and tell myself
'working with family
is regular' you just
need to get used
too i hate work
feeling good about is
only a chirping peace
from this this that
and those over there.

I don't spend my
time doing what
needs done
on days off,
don't even do
what i like,
but that's for
another
time.

AN ERA

hard to wanna do what needs doing in these consequenceless last blocks of hours. saying goodbi to inanimates that emanate associated memories, chunks of an era of my life left in material forms; significant people and moments figmented, abstracted by impending distance. saying goodby to passively maintained dirtiness, hello active labor hopefully exhaustive in new ways that fulfill

saying good bye to time preferred to whatever comes next, i'll make the best of saying guudbye to these vagrantly slow nights devoid of past buzzing for obvious reasons, nights that invite unwanted and constant contradictions, pointless arguments a new part of any public-facing job description.

saying goodbye direct and silent to regular things including people — telling everyone the whole story can be exhaustive so i quietly buzz with anticipation like the end of a final semester, not coming back or if so to just feel familiarly estranged from everyone's (new or old) regular things.

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Corey Qureshi is a writer and musician. He wrote two chapbooks; TRYING (2023, Bottlecap Press) and Company (2023, self). He produces BOXX Press, a publisher of small poetry booklets. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife and child.